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February 22, 2007

The Honorable Wayne Kuipers
State Senator
Post Office Box 30036
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536

Dear Senator Kuipers:

It is my pleasure to write to you in your capacity as chair of the Senate Education Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to tell you more about the University of Michigan and how high school graduates enrolling at our University manage their transition to college. I hope that our response is helpful to you.

1. How many applicants do you get each year?

For the Fall 2006 freshmen class, the University of Michigan received 25,806 applications. In addition, we received 2,385 transfer applications. Applications to the University of Michigan's graduate and professional programs were 36,462 for Fall 2006.

Applications have been increasing in the past several years. It is expected that Fall 2007 freshmen applications, which are currently being processed, will total well over 27,000.

2. What percentage of applicants become a part of the freshmen class?

Our freshmen targets vary somewhat from year to year, but last year we offered admission to 12,246 freshmen candidates, meaning we admitted 47.5 percent of our applicants. The enrolling freshmen class numbered 5,399, or 21 percent of the total applicants. Our applicants tend to apply to a number of institutions and have many choices; this is particularly true for our non-resident applications.

3. What percentage of students who enter as freshman eventually graduate?

Freshmen graduation rates are most commonly measured by looking at what percentage of students have graduated four, five, and six years after entry. Data as of Fall Term 2006 for the three most recent entering cohorts who have completed four, five, and six years of study are as follows:

4-year graduation rate for the Fall 2002 entering cohort:	70.2%
5-year graduation rate for the Fall 2001 entering cohort:	85.6%
6-year graduation rate for the Fall 2000 entering cohort:	86.9%

Although our graduation rates are comparable to those of many of the best public and private universities around the country, we feel there is always room for improvement. Over the last decade our six-year graduation rates have increased from 82-83 percent to the current rate of 87 percent (rounded). The challenge for the University is to maintain that rate, if not improve it further.

We believe six year graduation rates actually underestimate our eventual graduation rates if we tracked students beyond the sixth year. For example, historically about 1 percent of each entering cohort is still enrolled as of the beginning of the seventh year. We would assume that the likelihood of these students eventually graduating is probably quite high since they have already persisted that long. This would add anywhere from .5 percent to 1 percent to our six-year graduation rates—thus raising our estimated eventual graduation rate to close to 88 percent.

These numbers report only those freshmen who graduate from the University of Michigan. Students who leave the University of Michigan tend to transfer elsewhere and complete their undergraduate degrees at other institutions. Therefore, the actual graduation rate for all students is even higher.

4. What is the average number of years it takes a student to graduate?

An estimate based on a weighted average of the number of students who graduate in four, five, or six years is 4.2 years. This method of calculating time-to-degree, however, overestimates the time somewhat, partly because approximately 3 percent of entering freshmen graduate in less than four years.

Time-to-degree for students on our campus has actually declined over the last decade from about 4.3 years on average in the early 1990s to today's average of 4.2 years. Although this decrease may not appear to be large, it actually is significant as the time-to-degree average fluctuated very little prior to the 1990s.

Many of the students who take more than four years to graduate are in programs where academic requirements are such that the program itself is considered a five-year one. Examples of this are in Engineering, Pharmacy, Accounting, and Education, where either the number of credits required to complete the degree is higher than usual, the student selects an internship experience designed to enhance and enrich the academic experience, or the student is required to set aside time for student teaching and other field practicum experiences. Also, in some programs, outside accrediting agencies impose requirements that extend the length of time to degree.

5. What is the ACT cut score required for admissions?

The University of Michigan has no minimum score requirement for the ACT. Applicants are considered holistically, meaning that many aspects of a candidate's academic record and preparation are taken into account when making an admissions decision. Admission to the University is competitive; therefore, most students who are admitted have scored above the national average on standardized tests. On the ACT, for example, the middle 50 percent of our admitted students scored between 27 and 31 composite out of a 36 maximum.

6. What weight is given to ACT and SAT scores when making admissions decisions?

There is no specific weight given to SAT or ACT scores, as the University of Michigan does not use a formula for admission. Standardized test scores are a component in determining a student's academic preparation and potential, and are considered as one factor within the context of the student's entire record. When evaluating academic preparation, more weight is placed on an applicant's grades and academic program during high school (including the rigor of the curriculum and the student's election of any honors or AP courses offered) than is placed on test scores.

7. What role does ACT play in determining financial aid?

For determining need-based financial aid, ACT plays no role. The University of Michigan's policy is to meet the full demonstrated need of every resident undergraduate. All admitted students are eligible to apply for aid and, if judged to have need, will receive financial aid without regard to scores on any standardized test.

Some of the institution's merit scholarships, like those sponsored by the State, do rely on ACT test scores as part of the criteria for being awarded. The ACT guidelines for such scholarships vary.

8. What changes are you making, if any, to align with new high school graduation requirements?

We applaud the State's new requirements for graduation. The University of Michigan has long required that its applicants take a similarly rigorous program in order to be considered for admission. For example, admission to the University's largest unit, the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, requires that students take a minimum of 20 academic units which include at least four years English, three years mathematics, Two years biological and physical sciences, three years history and social sciences, and two years of the same foreign language. These are minimums; the University strongly encourages students to take four years of language, and that their science courses include two years of laboratory work.

Because the State's new curriculum and The University of Michigan's requirements are complementary, we do not anticipate making any changes.

**9. What amount of financial aid is received by students who do not graduate?
&
10. What percentage of students who drop out receive financial aid?**

We do not track information on financial aid status and dropouts. The majority of students who enroll at the University of Michigan stay and graduate. Those that leave the institution generally transfer successfully to another four-year institution. Thus, our concern about financial aid funds having been wasted or misused on non-graduating students is minor.

A primary goal of the University is to make a University of Michigan education accessible to and affordable by all qualified potential students in the State regardless of their family income. In addition to our commitment of meeting the full demonstrated need of residents, the staff in our Office of Financial Aid will do everything possible to help a student who finds himself/herself in a difficult financial situation that would otherwise lead to dropping out of school.

The University of Michigan offers a number of other kinds of supports to optimize every student's chances for retention, and we are pleased to have the opportunity to describe some of these programs later in this document.

11. Please provide us with a breakdown of your dropouts by race, sex, socioeconomic status, etc

Our student retention data system that is used for tracking retention and graduation rates contains demographic information on students such as race and gender but not socio-economic status. That data system looks at the enrollment status of a student as of the beginning of the Fall Term each year after entry. The "not enrolled" category does not distinguish between students who have left and have no intentions of re-enrolling at the University versus students who have temporarily dropped out but intend to return at a later time to complete their degrees (also known as "stop outs").

The attached table shows the breakdown by race/ethnicity and gender of the students from the Fall 2000 entering cohort (the most recent cohort for which we have six years worth of tracking data) who were not enrolled as of the beginning of the seventh year and who also had not graduated by that time. The table shows that about 12 percent of the students who enter the University as freshmen have not graduated or are no longer enrolled as of the beginning of the seventh year after entry. Underrepresented minorities are somewhat overrepresented in the non-enrolled population compared to their representation in the overall cohort.

Students who drop-out or stop-out do so for a variety of reasons. Based on studies conducted in the past, we know that most students who are no longer enrolled leave the University in good academic standing. Many students transfer to other institutions for a variety of reasons including the desire to pursue an academic program not offered by the University of Michigan, or to attend a smaller college or one closer to home.

12. What is the average class size of freshmen status, sophomore status, junior status, and senior status?

Because the size of our entering classes varies somewhat from year to year, we are providing the numbers for three years along with the three-year average. The number of students at each class level increases from freshmen to senior for several reasons. The first is our high retention rate, bolstered by additional students who join the University as special students, visiting students, and on exchange programs, as well as those who enroll as transfers. Additionally, some students who attain senior status graduate in the next academic year, as they are accumulating student teaching experience, internships, or are enrolled in programs that require additional study. We provided some information about such programs in our discussion of the average time to graduation.

	Fall 2004	Fall 2005	Fall 2006	3 year average
Freshmen	5,961	6,076	5,369	5,802
Sophomore	5,583	6,152	6,168	5,968
Junior	5,854	6,076	6,574	6,168
Senior	7,430	7,163	7,444	7,346

13. What is the rate of remedial education at your institution?

The University of Michigan-Ann Arbor does not have any programs that are remedial. Students who enroll at the University have generally taken a strong college preparatory program throughout high school.

14. Do you have programs to help retain students? Do you have someone who is assigned to each student who helps the student address academic and financial problems and any problems the student might have in adapting to the college/higher ed environment?

The University does not have a significant retention problem. In addition to the graduation rates reported earlier, over 96 percent of freshmen return for their sophomore year, which is one of the highest rates in the nation for public or private universities.

We believe that our success in achieving high and consistent retention and graduation rates through the years is due to a variety of factors that fall into two broad categories: the financial support students receive and the academic support that the University extends to them.

The University's stated commitment to our resident undergraduate students who are enrolled full-time is that we will meet their demonstrated financial need, and do so for the entire time they are enrolled at the University.

The other category of student support covers a wide array of services to students as they progress from freshmen orientation to the completion of degree requirements. Many of these programs take place at the school or college level, so students may have different options available to them depending on their enrollment. But regardless of school or college, the University provides a network of advising and other support.

The academic advisor assigned to an incoming freshman serves as the student's point of contact for questions about classes, study habits, appropriate work loads, contacting professors, and graduate student instructors, the academic resources available, and general information about programs and events at the University. The advisor is available to help with any academic difficulties along the way, pointing the student to the most appropriate resources within the University. These resources include services like subject matter tutoring, writing assistance, computer help, workshops, support groups, personal counseling, and guidance in career issues and financial aid.

We believe student persistence is also aided by academic programs that boost student engagement. The University has a number of learning communities from which students can choose. Learning communities bring together students and faculty with common academic interests, which may range from community service to cutting-edge research and from mathematics to communication arts. Michigan's learning communities promote academic success because they facilitate interaction with faculty and encourage students' intellectual engagement across disciplines. The University of Michigan has been nationally recognized for one such example, the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP). UROP pairs underclassmen and faculty in meaningful research experiences, and over 900 students elect to participate each year.

15. Do you have relationships with high school officials in the state that send their students to you? If so, what kind of relationship is it? If not, why not?

There are several ways in which the University has connections to high school administrators.

First, we work with guidance counselors across the state to ensure they understand the admissions requirements and application process for the University of Michigan. Representatives from the Office of Undergraduate Admissions (OUA) travel to high schools throughout Michigan to meet with guidance counselors, communicate our policies, and address any questions and concerns. In addition, OUA produces Michigan Highlights, a bi-annual newsletter mailed to high school guidance counselors. Highlights provides updates from the Director of Undergraduate Admissions on the current application season, as well as updates from around the University on issues that affect prospective students.

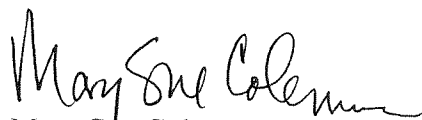
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We also provide important feedback to high schools whose graduates enroll at the University of Michigan. For example, we produce a report for all Michigan high schools that provides information on how enrolled freshmen have done in their first two semesters of work at the University of Michigan. This extensive report is mailed in the first week of September to the principal of each high school. It lists the courses taken by each student, and the grades the student earned in those courses. The report also provides the advanced placement information for test scores reported to the University of Michigan by their applicants and admits as well as a comparison to other University of Michigan freshmen.

Additionally, we produce a follow-up report for admissions officers to deliver to the director of guidance programs at the high schools they visit. This "Previous School Follow-Up report" provides a five-year summary of the applications received from the school and the admissions granted, as well as the number enrolled. It also provides a comparison of the mean high school Grade Point Average (GPA) and the first year the University of Michigan mean GPA for the students enrolled from that high school.

I hope that this information is helpful to you and the Senate Education Committee as you continue your work. Thank you, again, for the opportunity to respond.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Sue Coleman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mary" and last name "Coleman" clearly distinguishable.

Mary Sue Coleman
President

MSC:SMC

Enclosures

University of Michigan - Ann Arbor Campus
Non-Enrollees* as of the Beginning of the Seventh Year after Entry
by Race/Ethnicity and Gender
Fall 2000 Entering Freshmen Cohort

Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Non-Enrollees		Total Entering Cohort	
		Number of Students	% of Total Non-Enrollees	Number of Students	% of Total Cohort
African American	Men	53	8.0%	183	3.4%
	Women	74	11.1%	287	5.3%
	Total	127	19.1%	470	8.7%
Hispanic American	Men	34	5.1%	141	2.6%
	Women	22	3.3%	136	2.5%
	Total	56	8.4%	277	5.1%
Native American	Men	7	1.1%	23	0.4%
	Women	4	0.6%	16	0.3%
	Total	11	1.7%	39	0.7%
Asian American	Men	33	5.0%	348	6.4%
	Women	34	5.1%	387	7.2%
	Total	67	10.1%	735	13.6%
White & Other	Men	186	27.9%	1,751	32.4%
	Women	203	30.5%	1,967	36.4%
	Total	389	58.4%	3,718	68.8%
Non-Resident Aliens	Men	9	1.4%	97	1.8%
	Women	7	1.1%	67	1.2%
	Total	16	2.4%	164	3.0%
TOTAL ENTERING COHORT	Men	322	48.3%	2,543	47.1%
	Women	344	51.7%	2,860	52.9%
	Total	666	100.0%	5,403	100.0%

*Includes students who were not enrolled and who have not graduated
Source: SA07 Student Retention and Completion data set